

AC832: ACADEMIC APPEALS POLICY

Policy Title:	Academic Appeals Policy
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Links to Other Policy:	

St. Lawrence College is committed to making our resources usable by all people, whatever their abilities or disabilities. This document will be made available in alternative format upon request.

BACKGROUND

St. Lawrence College is committed to fairness and requires adherence to policy in decisions affecting students. Academic appeals provide a mechanism for reasonable review of academic decisions.

St. Lawrence College is responsible for maintaining standards that promote academic integrity and student success. The St. Lawrence College Academic Appeals Policy is based upon the concept of collegiality and seeks to find common ground and build consensus leading to a mutually satisfactory resolution. Should a student perceive that their learning experience or an academic decision has not been fair or accurate, the faculty and staff share a common interest in resolving the dispute in a professional, transparent and timely manner through the academic appeal process outlined in this policy.

A student may appeal an academic decision when the grounds for appeal outlined in this policy are met.

Definitions:

Abandoned Appeal: Timelines must be respected at each step of the process or the appeal will be terminated.

Academic Administrator: The Associate Dean or Dean (where there is no Associate Dean) of the school that delivers the academic course.

Academic Appeal Committee: St. Lawrence College utilizes a Standing Academic Appeal Committee at Level 3 of an appeal and it exists to provide an independent, internal review of academic appeal decisions in order to ensure that College policy and procedures have been followed, and that fairness has been achieved in arriving at the decision in question. The Appeal

Committee acts within the limits of the College's mandate and existing policy. The decision of the Academic Appeal Committee is final.

Appeal Advisor: The Appeal Advisor is an internal employee (normally the Student Rights and Responsibilities Officer but may be another College designated staff member) who acts as a resource and advises the student and/or faculty member on the Academic Appeal Procedure; their role is not to speak for the students or faculty members.

Day / Business Day: For the purpose of this policy, "day" means any day that includes Monday to Friday, excluding holidays, as defined in the St. Lawrence College academic calendar.

Dean: For the purpose of this document, "Dean" may refer to a Dean, an Associate Dean, or a Campus Dean.

Faculty Member: For the purposes of this document, the faculty member may be a professor, a placement supervisor, or a preceptor, that is an employee or agent of the College.

Location: Whenever possible, the Academic Appeal Procedure hearings will take place on the campus from which the appeal originated. The College reserves the right to utilize video or telephone conferencing when necessary.

Student: For the purpose of the Academic Appeal Policy, a student is anyone who is currently enrolled in a program or course of study or who has been enrolled at the College in the previous semester.

Support Person (Optional): While not required, a support person may be chosen by a student involved in Level Two or Three of an appeal. The support person will not be permitted to advocate for or speak on behalf of the student.

Suspension of Appeal: If a matter under appeal is being heard through another internal review mechanism or is taken to an agency outside the College for resolution, the College may suspend the Academic Appeal Procedure.

Written Notification: Personal communication to the student of an academic decision may take the form of a hard copy or electronic form (includes a transcript, college email, Blackboard or other course management program posting).

Purpose:

Students of St. Lawrence College have the right to a positive, enriching learning environment where learning outcomes are impartially assessed using evidence-based teaching methodology and where academic decisions are made in a manner that is free of bias, prejudice, unfairness or other inappropriate personal or systemic influences. The purpose of this policy is to outline the expectations of the student, faculty and staff with respect to the steps that must be taken should a student feel an academic decision was not fair or accurate.

Scope:

This policy applies to all students registered with St. Lawrence College including OntarioLearn students and students registered in partnership programs between Laurentian University and St. Lawrence College. Concerns related to the provision of academic accommodations are generally not covered through this policy; students with questions, concerns or complaints regarding their academic accommodations should consult with Counselling and AccessAbility Services. Matters relating to non-academic misconduct are addressed under the College's Student Code of Conduct policy.

POLICY STATEMENTS

1. The academic appeal process at St. Lawrence College includes three levels:

- Level One – Informal Academic Resolution Process
- Level Two – Formal Academic Appeal Process
- Level Three – Procedural Appeal

The Level One, Informal Academic Resolution Process, is an initial, less structured process involving direct dialogue between the faculty member who issued the grade and the student. Level One is intended to allow for constructive dialogue between the parties to attempt to resolve the issue under consideration. With the agreement of both parties, a mutually agreeable facilitator may be chosen at this stage to support the resolution process; Student Services can be utilized, if needed, to secure a neutral facilitator.

If there is not resolution at Level One, the student may initiate the Level Two, Formal Academic Appeal Process. Level Two is a structured, formal process where an Academic Administrator: reviews all documentation submitted by the student and faculty member, hears rationale from both parties, and works with both parties to attempt to identify a resolution (See Appendix A for detailed procedures). A student may request a rehearing at Level Two if new documentation or information becomes available that, through no fault of the student, was not available at the time that the Level Two appeal was heard.

The College also provides students with a final avenue for review, the Level Three, Procedural Appeal. A Level Three appeal can only be initiated when the student is not satisfied with the outcome at Level Two and when one of the following conditions are met:

- A substantial procedural error occurred during the Level Two, Formal Academic Appeal Process
- The sanctions imposed through an academic decision, and upheld at Level Two, are unreasonable or substantially disproportionate to the circumstances or offence.

Level Three appeals are heard by an Academic Appeal Committee (Appendix B). Decisions rendered by the Academic Appeal Committee are final.

2. It is the responsibility of the student, faculty and Academic Administrator to initiate each phase of the appeal process within established timelines as outlined in Appendix C, Procedures. If the student does not initiate a step within the stated timelines, the appeal will be considered abandoned. If a faculty member or Academic Administrator does not follow stated timelines, a student may proceed to a Level Three – Procedural Appeal. Formal timelines may be extended with agreement from all parties.
3. A student is allowed to have a support person present at Levels Two and Three of the appeal process. The support person will not be permitted to advocate for or speak on behalf of the student.
4. Group appeals may be pursued by students who participated in a group assignment/assessment and received the same grade. A group appeal may be made following the same process as an individual appeal.
5. While an appeal is in process, the student may continue in the course or program of study, unless prohibited by the Academic Administrator in cases where there are issues of liability, safety or the learning of others may be at risk.
6. Students and faculty may access an Appeal Advisor at any point in the appeal process for guidance. The role of the Appeal Advisor is to provide unbiased guidance on process. The appeal advisor will not advocate on either faculty or students' behalf. When requested, the Student Rights and Responsibilities Officer (SRRO), or designate, can act as a neutral Appeal Advisor throughout the appeal process.
7. There are three primary grounds for appeal under which a student may launch an appeal: merit of work; personal or compassionate reasons; and course outline and/or testing discrepancy. In addition, all appeals must adhere to at least one of the following criteria:
 - Individual academic decisions only (i.e. not final grades);
 - Academic decisions which have no numeric grade (i.e. Requirements Met/Requirements Not Met); and/or
 - Academic decisions pertaining to probation or withdrawal.

Appropriate documentation should accompany all appeal submissions. The following chart details examples of grounds for appeal along with associated appropriate documentation:

Grounds	Sample Appropriate Documentation
<p>Merit of Work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An assessment which may have been unfairly or inaccurately graded • Academic integrity allegation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific and detailed reasons, in writing, as to why the original grade was inaccurate

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any documentary evidence from course outline, learning plan, textbooks, etc. Academic Integrity Form
<p>Personal/Compassionate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unforeseen significant event or circumstance which affected the ability of the student to meet course requirements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presentation of a note from a medical professional If appropriate: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Death certificate Funeral announcement Travel itinerary Letter from a counsellor, therapist or religious leader Notice of hearing or subpoena
<p>Course Outline/Testing discrepancy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Management of course shows significant departure from course outline 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Record of where the departure occurred and explanation of how this has affected the student's success Course outline/Learning Plan

Note: The listed “sample appropriate documentation” is not intended as a comprehensive list, other documentation may be considered.

MONITORING

N/A

NEXT POLICY REVISION DATE

September 2022

SPECIFIC LINKS

N/A

APPENDIX A – ACADEMIC APPEAL PROCEDURES

P.1 Level One – Academic Decision Review

P1.1 To initiate an appeal, a student must first request an Academic Decision Review by completing an Appeal Form (available on SLC.me) and scheduling a review meeting with the faculty member. The appeal must be launched within 5 days of receiving the grade in writing or electronically. The appeal is considered launched once the student has made contact with the faculty member to request a review meeting.

P1.2 This meeting must occur within five (5) days of the student contacting the professor.

Timelines may be extended with the agreement of both parties.

The student must bring the completed appeal form and relevant documentation to this meeting. It is the student's responsibility to substantiate their grounds for appeal following the guidelines in the Academic Appeal Policy.

It is expected that both parties will make reasonable efforts to resolve the concern at this step.

If both parties agree, an Appeal Advisor can be present as a neutral facilitator. The Appeal Advisor is often the Student Rights & Responsibilities Officer, but can be another mutually agreed upon person.

P1.3 Following the meeting, the faculty member will complete Section A of the Academic Appeal form (Academic Decision Review) and return it to the student via email within three business days, copying the Student Rights & Responsibilities Officer for tracking purposes. Arrangements for any supplemental assessments should be made and agreed upon between the faculty and student and outlined clearly in the faculty's response.

P2 Level Two –Academic Appeal to Associate/Campus Dean

P 2.1 If a resolution is not achieved through the Academic Decision Review, the student may pursue Level two of the academic appeal process. The student must make contact with the Student Rights & Responsibilities Officer or designate, (acting as Appeal Advisor), within two (2) business days of the faculty member's decision to arrange a meeting to discuss Level two, the Academic Appeal to the Associate/Campus Dean.

P 2.2 The Appeal Advisor will review the appeal, supporting documentation, and the appeal form completed by the faculty member. The Appeal Advisor will determine whether the appeal meets the criteria to proceed.

If the appeal meets criteria, the student must electronically sign Section B of the Academic Appeal form and pay the \$25 administrative fee.

P 2.3 The Associate/Campus Dean receives the appeal paperwork and coordinates a meeting with the student, the Appeal Advisor (optional), and the faculty member (at Associate/Campus Dean's discretion), either separately or as a group, to hear and discuss the concern.

This meeting must take place within five (5) days of the student submitting the Level Two appeal paperwork.

The Associate/Campus Dean reserves the right to approach or include professors, staff, students, placement supervisors, preceptors, or others who can contribute information to assist in the decision making or resolution of the concern.

P 2.4 Following the Level two meeting, the Associate/Campus Dean will complete Section B of the appeal form with their response to the appeal within two (2) days of the meeting.

The response is distributed to the student, the Appeal Advisor, and the faculty member.

If the academic appeal is granted, the appeal process is complete and the administrative fee will be refunded.

P3 Level Three – Procedural Appeal

P 3.1 If the appeal is denied and the student feels there was a procedural error at Level two, they have two (2) business days after receiving the response from the Associate/Campus Dean to initiate a Level three procedural appeal by indicating their intention to the Appeal Advisor and electronically signing Section C of the appeal form.

A Level Three appeal can only be initiated following conditions are met:

- A substantial procedural error occurred during the Level Two, Formal Academic Appeal Process
- The sanctions imposed through an academic decision, and upheld at Level Two, are unreasonable or substantially disproportionate to the circumstances or offence.

P 3.2 The Appeal Advisor will notify the Director, Student Services, or designate and the Associate/Campus Dean of the student's intention to launch a procedural appeal and will also submit the appeal package.

P 3.3 The Director, Student Services, or designate, will choose an Appeal Committee. The committee will be made up of one faculty member, two administrative academic members (at least one Associate/Campus Dean) and one student. Committee members will not have been involved previously with any aspect of the appeal or academic decision.

P 3.4 The committee meeting must occur within ten (10) days of the notification of the student's submitted request to move to Level three of the Appeal Procedure. The Director, Student Services or designate will distribute all relevant material to the Appeal Committee members in advance of the meeting.

The Associate/Campus Dean will act as the Committee Chair. The Committee will provide an independent, internal review of the decisions and procedures of the Level one and Level two meetings.

The student, the Associate/Campus Dean from Level two, and the Appeal Advisor (optional) attend the Level three appeal meeting. The faculty member may also be invited to attend at the discretion of the Associate/Campus Dean from Level two.

P 3.5 If the student wishes to have a support person in attendance, they must advise the Appeal Advisor within 24 hours of the meeting and provide the identity of that person. This support

person may not speak on behalf of the student. See Appendix A for Level three Academic Appeal procedures.

P 3.6 Within three (3) days of the Appeal meeting, the Appeal Committee Chair will distribute the written decision, Section C of the Appeal form, to the student, the faculty member, the Appeal Advisor, the Associate/Campus Dean, the Director, Student Services or designate, and the Sr. Vice President Academic.

P 3.7 If the appeal is granted, the administrative fee will be refunded.

The decision of the Appeal Committee is final and binding and cannot be further appealed.

P 4 Laurentian University (LU) Degree Programs in Partnership with St. Lawrence College

For students registered in partnership programs between Laurentian University and St. Lawrence College, appeals are heard at students' home institution, including Academic Integrity appeals. If the appeal process is being contested by the student, the LU Registrar will be notified by the College Registrar and the appeal process will be examined by LU and a final decision rendered by the LU Registrar. All cases of Academic Integrity will be dealt with by following the LU Senate Approved Academic Integrity Policy at the student's home institution (Campus) in consultation with LU.

Academic Appeal Committee – Terms of Reference

St. Lawrence College utilizes a “standing” Appeal Committee to hear Level three Academic Appeals. Committee members (non-student members) can serve either a one year or two year term with consideration given towards continuity of committee members across academic years.

1. Jurisdiction

The Appeal Committee serves as the forum to hear Level three, student Academic Appeals. This is the final appeal step available to students. The committee is responsible for reviewing, and providing a judgement on, whether College policy and procedures were followed, and reasonably applied, in arriving at an academic decision. The committee has no jurisdiction where the sole question raised in an appeal turns on the exercise of academic judgement of a student’s work or performance by a faculty member. The committee also has no jurisdiction related to the provision or execution of academic accommodations; concerns related to academic accommodations are facilitated through the College’s Wellness and Accessibility office.

2. Composition of the Committee

The structure of the Appeal Committee, during an appeal, consists of one Faculty member, two administrative academic members (with at least one being an Associate/Campus Dean) and one student. In any given academic year, the Appeal Committee membership will consist of three faculty members and three administrative academic members. Students will be recruited for the Appeal Committee on an as-needed basis and will not have ongoing membership on the committee.

The Appeal Committee is chaired by the Associate/Campus Dean.

The Appeal Committee shall be structured for individual hearings such that no member of the committee is directly or indirectly involved in a matter that may be considered to put the member in a conflict of interest (i.e. hearing an appeal from a student who is registered in their home school or having prior knowledge of circumstances around the appeal or the student). During an appeal, all members of the Committee shall be voting members with one vote each. The student launching the Level three appeal may challenge for cause the neutrality of any member of the committee scheduled to hear his or her appeal. The balance of the committee will rule on the validity of the challenge. If the challenge is upheld, the member challenged shall be replaced by another committee member.

3. Procedures at the Hearing

At the hearing, subject to the rulings of the Committee, the following procedures should be followed.

- The appellant (student) may make an opening statement. The appellant may call and examine witnesses.
- The respondent (Faculty / Dean) may cross-examine any of the witnesses called by the appellant, including, where appropriate, the appellant.
- The respondent may make an opening statement. The respondent may call and examine witnesses.
- The appellant may cross-examine any of the respondent's witnesses.
- The appellant may make a closing statement.
- The respondent may make a closing statement.
- The appellant may respond to any matters arising out of the respondent's statement to which the appellant has not yet spoken.
- The Committee may impose reasonable time limits for the hearing of witnesses and statements.

The Committee may request that it be provided with further information other than that supplied initially by the appellant or the respondent. Without limiting this general power if, after a hearing, the Committee is of the opinion that it requires further information in order to reach a decision, it may either ask that the additional information be supplied at a further hearing or, without a hearing where the information is supplied in writing. In this latter case, both the appellant and the respondent must be given the opportunity of commenting on the submitted written information before the committee reaches a final decision.

In rendering a decision, the Committee may:

- Reverse the decision and grant such academic standing to the appellant as the committee thinks fit in the circumstances;
- Quash the decision and send the matter back to the Dean to be dealt with in accordance with proper policy and procedures; or
- Uphold the decision of the Dean.

APPENDIX C - ACADEMIC APPEAL TIMELINES

Level	Associated Timeline	Responsibility
Academic Decision Review	Within five (5) days of receiving an academic decision	Student
Academic Decision Review result by Faculty	Within two (2) days after the Academic Decision Review meeting takes place	Faculty Member
	**Within five (5) days for OntarioLearn courses	Manager of Distance Education
Contact Student Rights & Responsibilities Officer (SRRO) to launch Level Two Appeal	Within two (2) days after receiving Faculty response from the Academic Decision Review	Student
Level Two Academic Appeal Meeting	Within five (5) days after Dean receives package from SRRO	Dean
Level Two Academic Appeal Response	Within two (2) days after the Level Two Academic Appeal Meeting	Dean
Level three Procedural Appeal Launch	Within two (2) days after receiving the outcome of the Level two Academic Appeal	Student
Level three Procedural Appeal Committee Hearing	Within ten (10) days of the student's submission of the Academic Appeal form with Level three Appeal section signed	Appeal Committee
Level three Procedural Appeal Response	Within three (3) days of the Appeal Committee Hearing	Appeal Committee

**OntarioLearn courses require inter-institutional vetting so Academic Decision Reviews may take up to five (5) days.